



1042 Burlington Lane  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
[www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org)

---

**Testimony in Support of Automatic Restoration of Voting Rights  
Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary  
November 3, 2022**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Jason Hall and I am Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, representing Archbishop Shelton Fabre of Louisville, Bishop William Medley of Owensboro, Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, and Bishop John Iffert of Covington.

The bishops of Kentucky and their predecessors have, for many years, voiced strong support for the automatic restoration of voting rights. I also want to emphasize the support of the Kentucky Council of Churches, of which the Catholic Church is a member along with 10 other Christian denominations and traditions.

Participation in the political life of one's community is a right and also an obligation. The tradition of Catholic social thought places great emphasis on the common good, the sum total of conditions that allow people to thrive, both as individuals and as families and groups. This concept does include a robust concept of rights, but also a puts an emphasis on the responsibility each of us owes to help build up the communities in which we live. Voting is one of the ways that we fulfill that responsibility.

In 2005 the Conference issued a pastoral statement on criminal justice recommending that Kentucky's constitution be amended so that the right to vote would be automatically restored to former offenders upon completion of all the conditions of punishment imposed upon them by the court.

It is our belief that each of us is created in the image of God and that each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God. As a result we have certain rights as well as obligations. One such is the right and the obligation to participate in the public life of the community. This obligation finds expression in the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it teaches that exercising the right to vote is a moral obligation.

**Most Reverend  
Shelton J. Fabre**  
Archbishop of Louisville

**Most Reverend  
John C. Iffert**  
Bishop of Covington

**Most Reverend  
John Stowe, OFM Conv.**  
Bishop of Lexington

**Most Reverend  
William F. Medley**  
Bishop of Owensboro

**Jason D. Hall**  
Executive  
Director

We understand the reasons why a felony conviction has historically resulted in the loss of the right to vote. The commission of a crime is a breach of trust with one's neighbors and an act that causes them harm. Society needs an effective justice system to hold people accountable and protect all of us from harm.

However, once the conditions set by that system have been met, the interest of society is best met by the person who committed the criminal act once again accepting and fulfilling the responsibilities to the community. That includes working, paying taxes, meeting their family obligations, and participating in the political life of their community.

This General Assembly has taken several steps over recent years to encourage and facilitate the process of reintegration into society of those with felony convictions, and to reduce recidivism. We have supported and applauded those ongoing efforts and believe that an important step in that process is the restoration of voting rights to those who have completed their sentences. We thank you for your consideration and support for this effort.